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ABSTRACT

This bulletin presents the key elements of service learning and moves into a discussion of the benefits to be gained from incorporating service learning into a school-to-work system. It discusses the following key elements that are central to service learning programs and that can be expanded when incorporating a service learning component into a school-to-work component: integrated curriculum, time for reflection, building community partnerships, and diverse activities. The bulletin then addresses these practitioner-identified benefits to incorporating a service learning component into a school-to-work system: active learning, working with diverse populations, younger participants, school and community support, and improved citizenship and self-esteem. One example of effective practice is described: the West Philadelphia Improvement Corps, which operates a multifaceted, community-oriented school-to-work and service learning initiative in the John P. Turner Middle School with activities during and after the school day. The bulletin concludes with a listing of 12 organizations that can provide further information on connecting service learning to school-to-work. Brief summaries describe the organizations' focus and activities. (YLB)

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★RESOURCE BULLETIN

MAY 1996

School-to-Work and Service-Learning

School-to-work systems show young people how their classroom experiences relate to their work and to their lives, typically through internships, apprenticeships, or other work-based learning experiences. Other methods of positive youth development, such as service-learning, can also provide opportunities for the real world application of classroom-developed skills. As a work-based learning component in a school-to-work system, service-learning extends learning beyond the classroom into real world contexts where young people acquire not only basic math, science, English, and communication skills, but also broader problem-solving and decision-making skills. However, instead of focusing primarily on occupational skills sought by employers, service-learning addresses community issues and integrates academic learning with community service projects to develop these broader workplace competencies. In this respect, service-learning and school-to-work are linked through their efforts to connect young people with their communities--service-learning through community service and school-to-work through workforce participation.

In addition, service-learning can provide contextual, real world learning experiences in situations where work-based learning is limited or not appropriate. For example, some communities may have too few employers to offer enough work-based opportunities for all willing and interested youth. In these situations, school systems can establish a continuum of experiential learning practices, operating service-learning programs in elementary and middle school and school-to-work programs in high school. Through service-learning, youth can experience positive outcomes such as increased motivation, skill development, positive self-image, and the opportunity to reflect upon the learning provided by structured experiences outside the classroom.

The benefits of service-learning go beyond simply providing young people with rewarding experiences. It also helps students identify how classroom learning applies to the real world and how their service benefits others; develops stronger links between schools and the community; provides supervisors with motivated, energetic youth volunteers; and provides needed services to communities. Service-learning can provide the opportunities for youth to develop skills and knowledge that will help move students forward in an identified career pathway.

This bulletin presents the key elements of service-learning and moves into a discussion of the benefits to be gained from incorporating service-learning into a school-to-work system. It also lists organizations that can provide further information on connecting service-learning to school-to-work.

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Key Elements of Service-Learning

The following elements are central to service-learning programs, and can be expanded when incorporating a service-learning component into a school-to-work system.

Integrated Curriculum. Integrating the service being performed and classroom learning is a natural extension of the interdisciplinary nature of community service and operates under the same premise as other school-to-work work-based components. For example, if students are working to remove graffiti, environmental classes could focus on the damage that graffiti causes, science classes could discuss various methods for removing graffiti, and civics courses could address the issues of citizenship and personal responsibility. Other coursework could focus on setting up teams to clean the graffiti, gathering data to determine which area of the city to clean, and coordinating with local officials to start the project. This cross-curricular approach not only links classroom learning to the real world, but also exposes youth to a variety of career paths and options.

Time for Reflection. Any service-learning experience is enhanced when reflected upon, both during the experience and afterwards. In service-learning, reflection is an essential component that affords young people the opportunity to think, write, and talk about their service; how it relates to the classroom; how it benefits them personally; and how it benefits others. Receiving feedback from supervisors, those served, and peers provides youth the opportunity to share their thoughts with others while considering different perspectives on service. This further promotes the "learning" aspect of service-learning by helping young people analyze the broad array of skills and knowledge that they have gained from their experience.

Building Community Partnerships. Service-learning involves schools, students, community-based organizations, local government officials, and the public in program development to promote cooperation and collaboration among these institutions. The active involvement of each sector also helps ensure that program services are meeting individual and community needs. Through this strategy, service-learning can expand the scope of school-to-work to provide the opportunity for young people to address the needs of their community and incorporate a unique youth perspective into the development of local community services.

Diverse Activities. Through its base in community service, service-learning expands the opportunities and learning experiences available to young people beyond the constraints of work-based learning. As a result, young people benefit from exposure to a wide variety of experiences from which they may take different but equally important lessons. For example, working with the elderly can teach young people about intergenerational issues such as aging and changes in society, while mentoring pre-school or elementary school students can develop communication skills. Other service, such as work in a neighborhood soup kitchen, can provide lessons about hunger and homelessness. This type of diversity develops a broader range of interpersonal skills while offering youth the opportunity to learn about experiences different from their own.

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Benefits of Connecting School-to-Work and Service-Learning

Practitioners have identified the following as benefits to incorporating a service-learning component into a school-to-work system.

Active Learning. Service-learning brings to the school-to-work table the belief that young people learn best when they are active participants in the learning process. The key to the success of service-learning is that *learning* drives the *service*. Although students do learn simply through the experience of service, when learning is viewed as the foundation, and service as the way to reinforce that foundation, young people benefit more from participation. Although service-learning provides many benefits, such as improved citizenship and an increased sense of importance and involvement in the community, it must be remembered that at its core is the development of skills in an active, real world, contextual setting.

Working with Diverse Populations. Incorporating a service-learning component into a school-to-work system allows young people to experience working with a wide variety of individuals. Community service projects often involve many participants, offering practitioners the opportunity to bring together young people from different backgrounds and cultures to learn how to cooperate with each other. Youth also learn to work with adults, who provide a different perspective on service and may serve as mentors to participants. Often, young people work side by side with adults, reinforcing the view that youth are important members of the community.

Younger Participants. A service-learning component allows for the extension of school-to-work opportunities to the elementary and middle school level by providing a vehicle for younger students to obtain school-to-work experiences. Although middle school students may not be ready for structured work experiences, they can become involved in activities to clean up their neighborhoods, tutor elementary school students, or participate in any of a variety of service projects linked to classroom learning or positive youth development.

School and Community Support. Integrating a service-learning component into school-to-work can help increase support from schools, educators, and communities. As young people participate in service activities that directly benefit the community, members of the community and community-based organizations recognize how valuable service-learning is to society. In addition, as teachers, school administrators, and other educators witness young people developing substantive classroom and workforce preparation skills through community service, they too may be more willing to offer increased support.

Improved Citizenship and Self-Esteem. Service-learning further highlights to school-to-work participants their importance to society and teaches that they can have an impact on others and on their communities. As a result, youth can become better citizens and more active members of their community. Showing young people that they make a difference in the lives of others increases their self-esteem and sense of personal responsibility. It also shows adults how vital youth can be as resources in their communities.

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Effective Practice

The John P. Turner Middle School serves primarily low-income, sixth through eighth grade students in southwest Philadelphia. Eleven years ago, West Philadelphia teachers, administrators, parents, and community and institutional partners began the West Philadelphia Improvement Corps (WEPIC), a school-based school and community revitalization project. Turner Middle School, the main WEPIC site, operates a multifaceted, community-oriented school-to-work and service-learning initiative whose activities take place both during and after the school day.

At Turner, service-learning is viewed as a key component in a school-to-work system designed to improve learning outcomes and strengthen communities. One example of this is Turner's health and nutrition program, which involves two classrooms in each grade. In sixth grade, Turner students study basic health and nutrition with undergraduates from "Anthropology 210," a University of Pennsylvania community service seminar that has worked with Turner students and teachers for six years. As part of an ongoing partnership with area schools, Anthropology 210 anchors nutrition education in real world activities, such as cooking and other independent living skills, as well as in core academic subjects (i.e., language arts, math, science, and English).

In seventh grade, Turner students become peer educators. In one program, participants travel each week to nearby Anderson and Longstreth Elementary Schools to teach nutrition, violence prevention, and other health-related skills to younger students. In another program, students operate "Fruits are Us and Vegetables, Too," a healthy foods school store. The store is designed to help students translate their education in nutrition into a change in behavior for both themselves and others, and has made impressive sales of healthy food to Turner children as well as to their parents and teachers. In eighth grade, students may move into a school-to-work program in which they observe adult supervisors for three hours each week at one of several West Philadelphia health institutions. This experience is designed to expose participants to career options in the rapidly expanding health care industry, and allows them to witness first-hand how basic academic skills--such as math, science, and English--apply to their future work. During the three grades, each learning experience is enhanced through reflection discussions and by writing journals and articles for the school-community newspaper.

Including service-learning as a part of school-to-work has produced extraordinary results in terms of teaching and learning at Turner Middle School. Community-based activities are the foundation for integrating the school's curriculum, helping students to develop both academic and life skills. This not only increases student motivation, but also improves the community. In addition, the partnerships created among the schools, higher education institutions, and health facilities have strengthened the fabric of the entire community.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOPIC, PLEASE CONSULT THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES:

For further information on the effective practice site listed in this bulletin, please contact the following individual:

The John P. Turner Middle School: Marie Bogle, WEPIC Coordinator, Turner Middle School, 59th and Baltimore Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19143 ★ 215-471-6410 ★ bogle@libertynet.org.

Organizations

Active Citizenship Today (ACT) is an innovative civic participation program for middle and high school students, planned and implemented in collaboration between the Close Up Foundation and Constitutional Rights Foundation. ACT breathes new life into the study of government and civics by challenging students to apply the knowledge and skills they are learning in the classroom to vital community problems. Designed for social studies classes, the ACT curriculum, including student and teacher materials built around a problem-solving framework, has been adapted by teachers across the country in a variety of subjects. **Close Up Foundation**, 44 Canal Center Plaza, Alexandria, VA 22314 ★ 800-336-5479 x640 ★ **Constitutional Rights Foundation**, 601 South Kingsley Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90005 ★ 213-487-5590.

American Youth Policy Forum is a nonprofit professional development program, primarily for federal policy aides in the U.S. Congress and executive branch. The Forum's field trips and policy reports often feature developments in community service and service-learning as elements in a comprehensive youth development strategy for youth success. To request publications list: 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 719, Washington, DC 20036 ★ 202-775-9731.

The Corporation for National and Community Service is a federal agency whose mission is to engage Americans of all ages and backgrounds in community-based service that addresses the nation's education, public safety, human, and environmental needs. The Corporation administers three main programs: AmeriCorps, the National Senior Service Corps, and Learn and Serve America. Learn and Serve America provides grants to state education agencies, community organizations, nonprofit organizations, and institutions of higher education to integrate service and service-learning into the daily academic lives of students and community members in K-12 and higher education. 1201 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20515 ★ 202-606-5000 ★ http://www.cns.gov.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonprofit membership organization of all heads of public education departments across the nation, responding to and providing leadership on a broad range of education issues. CCSSO is currently conducting a study of the connections between service-learning and school-to-work through a series of site visits. Findings from this study will be included in a forthcoming publication. One Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001-1431 ★ 202-408-5505.

FYI Youth is a multi-phase initiative that promotes youth development by linking young people directly to other young people, adults, and their communities. FYI Youth consists of three main components: **YouthMapping**, in which young people "map" the programs, services, and opportunities available to them and their peers in their communities; **YouthData**, which synthesizes the data obtained from YouthMapping; and **YOUTHLINE**, which provides the information from YouthData directly to local practitioners. Contact: Greg Taylor, Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, Academy for Educational Development, 1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW, 9th Floor, Washington, DC 20009 ★ 202-884-8273 ★ gtaylor@aed.org.

The National Association of Partners in Education (NAPE) is a national membership organization dedicated to providing leadership in the formation of effective educational partnerships between a school or a school district and one or more community organizations and businesses. NAPE provides leadership to educators, citizens, businesses, and other community organizations, helping to create understanding and build trust among these partners. Service-learning is a central component of NAPE's efforts. 209 Madison Street, Suite 401, Alexandria, VA 22314 ★ 703-836-4880.

The National Association of Service and Conservation Corps (NASCC) is the membership organization for 120 state and youth corps programs around the country. Since its founding in 1985, NASCC has served as an advocate, central reference point, and source of assistance for the growing number of state and local youth corps. Corps programs engage young people, generally 16 to 25 years old, in paid, productive, full-time work which benefits both the youth and their communities. Corps members devote part of each week to improving their basic education skills and to preparing for future employment. 666 Eleventh Street, NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20001 ★ 202/737-6272 ★ emonascc@igc.apc.org.

The National Helpers Network, Inc. (NHN) provides training and technical assistance to schools, school districts, and community-based organizations working to develop service-learning programs for youth. In addition, NHN operates a database which includes information on model service programs, research, publications, organizations, and professionals relevant to the field of service-learning. NHN also publishes *Community Youth Roles*, a quarterly newsletter offering updates and insight on service-learning programs and practices. 245 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1705, New York, NY 10016-8728 ★ 800-646-4623 ★ helpnet@IGC.APC.org.

The fourteen member **National Service-Learning Cooperative** provides leadership, knowledge, and technical assistance necessary to support and sustain service-learning programs for Learn and Serve America grantees and sub grantees, K-12 teachers and administrators, community-based organizations, state and local officials, colleges and universities, and the general public. **The Cooperative Clearinghouse** provides a toll-free information number, a national database of programs and other resources, an electronic database and listserv, and referrals to training and other resources. University of Minnesota, 1954 Buford Avenue, Room R-290, St. Paul, MN 55108-6197 ★ 800-808-SERVE ★ serve@maroon.tc.umn.edu ★ http://www.nicsl.coled.umn.edu.

The National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE) is a membership organization that supports the effective use of learning through experience for students' academic and career development, civic and social responsibility, career exploration, cross-cultural and global awareness, and ethical and leadership development. NSEE houses the National Resource Center for Experiential and Service Learning, which contains publications, research materials, program information, and other resources on experiential education and service-learning. NSEE also refers practitioners to consultants who help develop programs integrating service and learning. 3509 Haworth Drive, Suite 207, Raleigh, NC 27609-7229 ★ 919-787-3263 ★ nsee@interpath.com.

Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) is a nonprofit organization that works to improve youth-oriented private and public sector policies and practices. P/PV has undertaken a number of projects in the area of work and service-learning, most notably WorkPlus, Community Change for Youth Development (CCYD), Bridges to Work, the Summer Training and Education Program (STEP), the Urban Corps Expansion Project (UCEP), and Practical Education for Citizenship and Employment (PECE). Through its work, P/PV has developed a wide variety of model curricula, tool kits, resource guides, and other resources useful to practitioners of service-learning programs. One Commerce Square, 2005 Market Street, Suite 900, Philadelphia, PA 19103 ★ 215-557-4400 ★ ppvg@dolphin.upenn.edu.

The Youth Volunteer Corps of America (YVCA) is a national network of over 40 local affiliates that promote civic responsibility through structured volunteer service among middle school and high school young people. YVCA's mission is to create and increase volunteer opportunities to enrich America's youth, address community needs, and develop a lifetime commitment to service. Local YVCs arrange for young people to do full-time, team-based volunteer service during the summer, and they organize service projects and community-based service-learning (often in partnership with schools) during the school year. Youth volunteers participate actively in structuring YVC service activities, developing and refining their employability skills. 6310 Lamar Avenue, Suite 125, Overland Park, KS 66202-4247 n 913-432-YVCA.

For additional information, please contact:
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